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**Creativity's essential others. Notes towards a poetics of re-creation.**

Abstract:

Through verbal experiment as well as critical and historical exposition, this shows how much more there is to notions of *creation* than *creativity* as currently understood. It also highlights the crucial contribution of alternative terms such as *imagination*, *inspiration* and *emergence*. Building on the recognition that the 'create' terms span discourses ranging from the divine to the human and the artistic to the commercial, there is concerted modeling of a wide variety of contemporary possibilities such as 'hyper-creation', 'de-' and 're-creat-ing' and 'post-creatives'. These cue fresh encounters with classic, especially biblical 'creation' texts and develop into an expansive program of seriously playful *poetics*, including 'diagrammatics', 'dialogics' and a generically hybrid form of 'con-verse-ation'. The reader is invited to participate as re-writer throughout, so the process is radically *re-creational* and the project openly ongoing.

Biographical note:

Rob Pope is Emeritus Professor of English at Oxford Brookes University and a National Teaching Fellow. He has taught English at universities in New Zealand, Wales and Russia, been a visiting professor in Australia and Japan, and is a regular consultant for the Open University and the British Council. His books include *Textual Intervention* (1995), *Creativity: Theory History Practice* (2005), *Creativity in Language and Literature* (2011) and *Studying English Language and Literature* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed, 2012). As an academic and teacher, he is currently working on the metalinguistic and interdisciplinary dimensions of English and the poetics and textual politics of creativity. Outside formal education, he is collaborating on performance narratives featuring music and dance.

Keywords:

Creative Writing – Writing Creativity – Poetry – Poetics

Something relevant may be said about creativity provided it is realized that, whatever we say it is, there is always something more and something different.

David Bohm and David Peat, *Science, Order and Creativity* (2000: 35)

Be fruitful and multiply!

after *Genesis* 1.22 & 1.28, Authorised version (1611)

'Creativity' is such a pervasive buzz-word nowadays that it is easy to forget—and crucial to recognise—just how comparatively recent and potentially transient the term is. The first use of the abstract noun 'creativity' recorded in the latest edition of the big *Oxford English Dictionary* is less than a hundred and fifty years old (1875); and the word wasn't even spotted for the first edition of 1929 so it had no entry. To be sure, earlier cognate nouns such as 'creator', 'creation' and 'creature' appear in English from the 13<sup>th</sup> century onwards; but 'create' as an active verb had to wait till the 16<sup>th</sup> century, and the adjective 'creative' only became current from the 18<sup>th</sup> century onwards. What's more, all these early 'creat-' words carry with them an unavoidable aura of divinity in the first instance and of artistic sublimity in the second; also a strong implication of something already achieved and finished (the common Latin root is the past participle of the verb *creatus*, not the present infinitive *creare*). 'Creation', then, was something that a supernatural being called God did and, by extension, something that special people called Artists did in a god-like way—all with a strong sense of being done and dusted (*created*). All this is a significant and enduring backdrop to modern notions of who or what is reckoned capable of being a creator or a creation. (For the sake of readability, references will be gathered in clusters towards the ends of sections rather than cluttering up the whole text.)

The noun 'creativity' evidently arose when the need was felt for an abstract term to express a more concertedly secular and capacious human view of who or what has the power to create things. Creativity thus extends to qualities and capacities that most people are reckoned to have (at least potentially)—not just gods and semi-divine artists. But that extension, we know, did not happen until the later 19<sup>th</sup> century and the appearance of the term at issue; this was also when the adjective 'creative' was beginning to be widely applied to writing and arts and crafts more generally, less exclusively conceived. What's more, at present we seem to be in a fourth phase where the 'create' words are being further extended to what is done by machines and artificial intelligence at large, especially computerised information systems. This is a perspective that is modelled later in a couple of diagrams. For the moment it is sufficient—and salutary—to recognise that 'creativity' is still a relative newcomer on the cultural-historical scene. It's just one of many kids on many blocks.

Conversely, therefore, it is worth stressing the myriad other terms that offer genuine alternatives to *creativity*: terms that are capable of expressing other necessary, desirable and sometimes preferable ideas. A beginning list of such abstract nouns, older and newer, includes *genius*, *talent*, *imagination*, *invention*, *discovery*, *muse*, *inspiration*, *gift*, *originality*, *innovation*, *enterprise* and *emergence*. And even then we would be glancing past significant cognates and grammatical forms with alternative senses: 'image', 'imaging' and 'imaginary' (or 'the Imaginary') alongside 'imagination' is one such cluster. 'Genius' is another when placed alongside close and distant verbal relatives such as 'genesis', 'generation', 'ingenuity' and 'engineer' (French 'ingénieur'), French-

English ‘ingénu’ and ‘genetics’—all of them organised round the prodigiously productive root *gen-* (meaning ‘birth’ or ‘growth’). Yet other verbal clusters and conceptual configurations will be explored—and some effectively brought into existence—later. The immediate point is that all these alternative terms are what is meant by creativity’s *essential others*. And the crucial thing to grasp is that, for anything like a sophisticated and historically aware sense of ‘creativity’, you can’t properly talk about the former without invoking a whole host of the latter. Put another way, you can’t have the one without the many. (Stimulating studies of such cultural ‘key words’ to use alongside the *Oxford English Dictionary* and *Roget’s International Thesaurus* are Williams 1983; Ayto 1990; and Bennett et al 2005; all the above also feature in Pope 2005.)

A few preliminary words about the terms in the subtitle—*Notes towards a poetics of re-creation*—will also help establish some initial bearings. The exploration that follows is designedly experimental, provisional and open-ended. It is offered as a work-in-process, a project to be continued, countered or redirected—hence *Notes towards*. This is a *poetics* in that we shall be as much concerned with *poiesis* in the most general sense of ‘making’ (whatever the material and medium) as with *poetics* in the specifically verbal sense of ‘word-play and poetry’. What’s more, we shall be involved in the generation of fresh terms and perhaps even theoretical models as well as the investigation and reinvigoration of old ones. So this is not just a contribution to ‘*the Poetics of Re-creation*’, as though there were one already in existence and it just needed extending. Rather, this is ‘*a Poetics*’, one of many potential ones, which we too are in on the act of re-creating. (Greene et al 2012 is a prodigious resource on Poetics at large; Hecq 2015 is a suggestive individual critique of the current poetics of Creative Writing, and Harper 2015 a capacious collective extension.)

From the outset, then, that ‘we’ must be stressed. If the present piece is really to work, it requires participation and a willingness to play—co-operation and co-creation, if you like. Most immediately, this means that *we* (i.e. *you* and *I*) both have to be active in our respective moments of reception and reproduction. In other words—and the whole point is that there are always *other* words that can be put in play by *other* people—this is all about actual re-writing as well as active reading, responding in word and deed. And that is why the final emphasis falls on ‘Re-creation’ (with a hyphen). By *Re-creation* in its strongest sense is meant the ongoing, ceaselessly iterative activity of making afresh not just again, however and wherever, in whatever material is to hand and with whatever purpose or people in mind. This is clearly very different from ‘recreation’ (without a hyphen) in its routinely weak sense of ‘pastime’ or mere ‘entertainment’. (*Re . . . creation* and *Re-creating* are yet other possibilities floated over the course of this piece. The term itself, as an idea in action, requires no less.) But whatever the precise formulation, the point holds and will be pressed. To be fully re-creative both you and I have really got to play for this to really work. And if that means making fresh words from old—and splitting and rejoining a lot more than infinitives—so be it! Seriously, let the games commence . . .

## Re-creating 'creativity' poetically

For poetry makes nothing happen.  
WH Auden, *In Memory of WB Yeats*, Part 2 (1940)

The text that follows was prompted by the above teasingly ambiguous line from Auden. Together they express much of my basic thinking on creativity and poetry: not only how we go about defining 'creativity' and may write poetry but also how we can go about creating definitions poetically. More generally, this is as much about writing as thinking, ways of handling words while constructing concepts. So please use my text—or the Auden—as a pre-text to make another of your own. Feel free to use a similar or different format, but work 'creativity' and other 'creat-' words in there somewhere. That way we shall at least begin in partly the same place, even while moving wherever and however the mood and materials take us. This is how they took me:

Creativity makes something  
from something else  
not nothing

(Creation *ex nihilo*  
is a trick of the light  
in darkness)

((is a sleight of hand  
in the folded void  
up some body's sleeve))

((((is what gets bracketed in)))

and ((( ( ))) out

Creating—the suffix insists—is what someone somewhere  
is continually doing . . .  
But when they stop  
is not.

What's more, creativity is really not a thing  
just because it's a singular abstract noun  
and thus so seemingly monolithic.

Rather, they are things

— astonishingly singular things —

sometimes singing

thinging

So maybe what's not just an it  
must at least be an I-you-we-they-he-she-it . . .  
S-he-it?!

It's hard and even rude to say.

So yes, perhaps we had better stick with Auden after all:  
'For poetry makes nothing happen'.

And though he doesn't mention the c-word  
let alone the re-c word  
he did help make this  
and now that  
and quite possibly the other  
happen

Once you have written something in response to Auden or my response to Auden, we can carry on. This will have served to get us going 'poetically'. (A lively collection in which contemporary poets expressly respond to poems of the past is Carol Ann Duffy's *Answering Back*, 2007.)

### Re-creating 'creativity' diagrammatically

'Diagram' from Latin *diagramma* (Greek διαγραμμα) 'across-letter', 'writing across':  
a graphic representation of the course or results of an action or process;  
a figure made of lines and words or numbers;  
after *The Concise Oxford Dictionary* (2008)

The diagram is both de-script-ive and re-vision-ary, both script and vision,  
symbol and icon [...] passive depiction and active intervention.  
John Mullarkey, 'Thinking in Diagrams',  
*Post-Continental Philosophy: An Outline* (2006: 180–81)

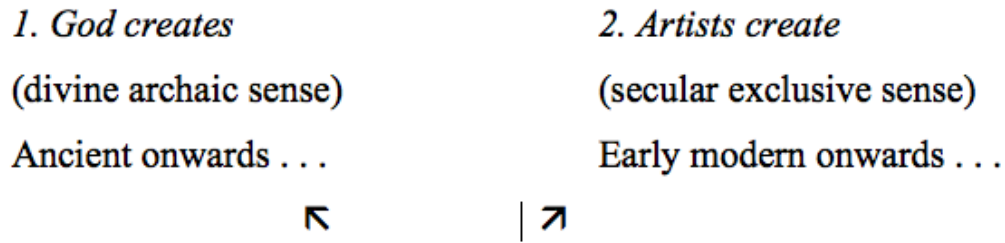
*Diagrams*, as the first epigraph confirms, are basically another way of deploying words and numbers among other shapes, a form of 'across-writing'. The second epigraph reminds us that this kind of graphic-verbal display and play can have visionary force, be a way of generating fresh thoughts not just representing existing ones. We start with some shapes exploring the 'create' words, and then put other key terms in play with different dynamics. Alongside these, even the most elementary activity of opening up and filling in gaps in text ('cloze exercises' in language textbooks, for example) may be grasped afresh—as an opportunity for daring experiment and profound reflection while having serious fun. That, at any rate, is the spirit in which these word-pictures are offered. And some of them, as we shall see, turn out to be *moving pictures* in every sense of the phrase.

#### (i) *Bent time-line*

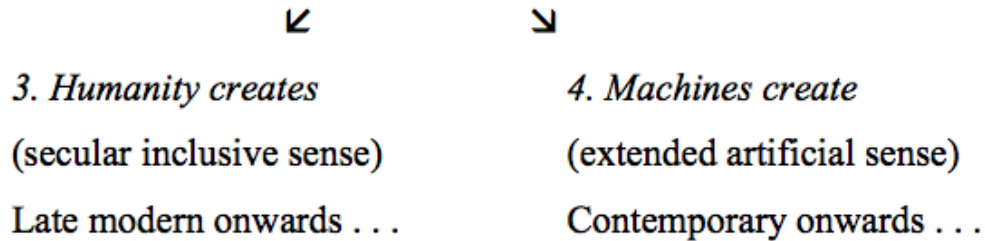
This started off as a conventional time-line illustrating the historical trajectory of the English 'create' words introduced earlier. Thus:

Divine creation (13<sup>th</sup> c.) > Creative Artist (18<sup>th</sup> c.) > Creativity of Humanity (late 19<sup>th</sup> c.) > Creativity of Machines (late 20<sup>th</sup> c.)

And here is what happens if that timeline is bent and re-cast so as to make a square shape centred on an overall question:



*Who or What Creates?*



*Diagram 1. Timeline bent around the ‘creative’ present*

Bending a timeline like this is worth doing because in fact *all* these senses are potentially available nowadays—hence ‘onwards . . .’ in every case. So precisely how that question at the centre is actually answered depends upon a complex interplay of forces represented by the four corners. Who or what creates may thus be variously, immediately or ultimately, attributed to a God, an Artist, Humanity in general, or a Machine. And usually there is a shifting combination of at least two in play, as when creative Artists are reckoned to be divinely inspired and/or expressions of a common human capacity. This square can also be circled by fears or hopes that Machines (e.g. computers) may acquire God-like powers; or, conversely, that God the creator is in fact a kind of predetermining machine (as Deists insist and Atheists resist). The point is that, like all culturally central terms, the ‘create’ words are highly charged and live on simultaneously in various guises and disguises. They never have a single stable sense, however they are presented or appear. To be sure, certain groups—religious, commercial, academic—constantly seek to colonise and perhaps control particular meanings, but these can never be cornered for long.

Currently, for example, as is well known, there is a concerted push for the ‘Creative Industries’ and its ‘creatives’ to corner the market in ‘creative enterprise’. Therefore, if one wished, the above ‘square’ could be further bent and extended so as to add yet another angle on what it means to create nowadays. The result would be a ‘pentagon’ or, more pointedly, a ‘pentacle’, with the extra aspect labelled thus:

5. *Creative Industries*  
(extended commercial sense)  
contemporary onwards . . .

But arguably this angle is already covered by a combination of three or all four of the existing senses. It all depends how far the ‘creatives’ in question are aligned or align themselves with the specifically Artistic, broadly Human, overtly Machinic or even quasi-Divine senses already in play. Yet another, sixth term and corresponding angle could be added if the discourses of, say, *Creative Learning* were distinguished as such. And so on. But whatever the precise shape and dynamic settled on, the immediate point holds. Current notions of creativity are the product of ongoing and highly variable acts of triangulation (quadrature, pentation . . .).

A more general observation is worth making. For some purposes, diagrams such as this are peculiarly powerful ways of modelling dynamics. They help realise not just represent issues. Over and above choices of individual ‘learning style’ and issues of ‘multiple intelligence’, what may be called *diagrammatics* is an aspect of poetics that can help us all see bigger pictures. What’s more, whether small or big, these pictures always in effect move as we use and extend them. And of course now, with the use of Computer Aided Design, they can be made to move in virtually any direction and dimension. Though it’s important to add this is always within the constraints of current screen, multi-media technology and programming. (See Kac 2007 and attached references for current websites. Creative design in educational writing is approached practically in Sharples 1999 and the theorising potential of diagrams explored in Mullarkey 2006 and Dumoncel 2009.) Meanwhile, back on our plane paper surface or pixilated computer screen—neither of them ever really a *tabula rasa*, notice—we clearly have a great deal more going on . . .

(ii) *Open word-scatter*

The diagram below is a scatter of parts of the ‘create’ words. These parts either already exist as actual combinations or could be re-combined and extended so as to produce fresh ones. Actually existing combinations are in normal font; some potentially existing re-combinations are in italics. Yet others can be freely inserted in the space between and around (hence ?). There is a faint trace of a linear arrangement in the overarching distinction of word structure in terms of ‘Prefix – Stem – Suffix’. But the underlying effect is of a profusion—a complex of fission and fusion—involving all sorts of bits of words coming apart and sticking together. See what you make of it:

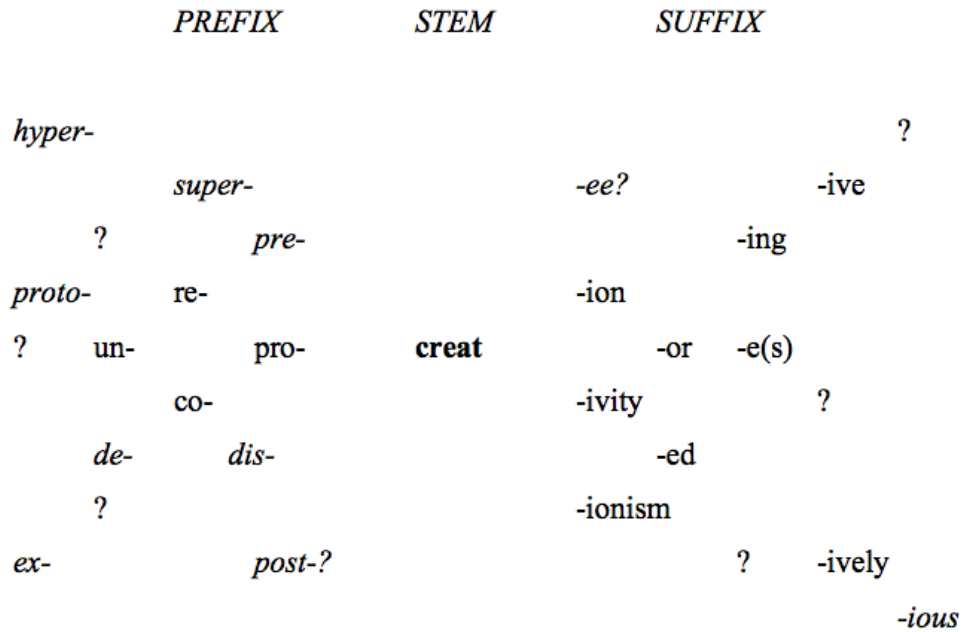


Diagram 2. *Re-fixing the 'create' words*

There are at least two other things that can be done with this diagram. One is to reflect on and perhaps look up the *creat* words that evidently do already exist. ‘Creationism’, for example, turns out to be not only a kind of fundamentalist Christianity but also the name of an influential poetic vanguardism (Spanish *Creationismo*) initiated by the Chilean poet Vicente Huidobor (see Greene et al 2012: 315–16). Another possibility is to speculate on the possible meanings of items (in italics) that apparently don’t yet exist but might if they were found—or felt—to make a worthwhile distinction. ‘Post-create’, I suspect, is already in use. But there will be yet others that could or should be. As always with new words from old, it’s a matter of need, desire and opportunity. And if more than one person agrees to a fresh coinage it has at least a chance of wider currency.

Meanwhile, it is worth making an obvious point that is often overlooked. The choice of a particular grammatical form from among the ‘creat’ words makes a huge difference to how the sense of the stem is understood and applied. That is, whether we speak of ‘creativity’ (as abstract noun) or ‘creating’ (as verbal process) or ‘creative’ (an adjective attached to a noun) or ‘creatively’ (an adverb attached to a verb) fundamentally changes the way in which the meaning is deployed relative to other words and to what they refer. Moreover, the routine capacity of ostensibly a single word to perform more than one grammatical function makes a difference too. ‘Creating’, for example, can be both a verb and a noun: in ‘She is creating something’ it is part of a transitive verb; in ‘Creating is a process’ it is a noun in subject position. Grammatical category, like diagrammatic configuration, therefore determines verbal range and conceptual reach, even where the underlying sense seems the same. A relatively recent example is the category-shift of the adjective ‘creative’ so as to produce a noun (often plural): ‘creatives’. This is clearly a



significant and perhaps symptomatic development. Though of precisely what is harder to say. For 'creatives' in industry, like 'creative writers' in education, are more likely to be referred to as such by other people than to use such terms of themselves, except self-consciously and perhaps ironically. But even then, such names and the categories they express may be readily embraced when it comes to matters of finance and funding. You're happy to be hailed as a 'creative' or 'creative writer' if you can get a contract or grant out of it.

Together, then, the two diagrams above confirm that *creativity's essential others* are internal as well as external: not just 'other words' but notionally 'the same word' grasped in different ways. There are broader methodological implications too. Deploying the basic apparatuses of etymology and morphology in graphically experimental ways opens up an important space for critical-creative cross-over, prompting a reevaluation of textbooks and pedagogy, for example, as well as possible recasting of academic writing practices at large. In short, diagrams can function as both toys and tools. They are dynamically visual and potentially kinetic ways of creating definitions. And they are especially desirable when it comes to both defining and demonstrating issues of creativity. (Related approaches to creativity and poetics in the contexts of interdisciplinarity, English and politics are developed in Pope 2016a and 2016b.) With this in mind, we now take a rather different line on 'lines'.

## One-liners, one-words, and other world-creating acts

### **b e c o m i n g**

'Being' is constituted by its 'becoming'. This is the principle of process.  
Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality* (1929: 18)

It has often struck me that the description of people as *human beings* is less than accurate.  
A 'being' suggests something that is formed and static and clearly unlike any of us.  
Perhaps we should start to talk of people as *human becomings* ...  
George Cary, Preface to Patrick Wentworth, *Becoming Fully Human* (2003)

Met(r)amorphosis – becoming Woman / Animal / Insect  
Meta(1)morphosis – becoming Machine  
Rosi Braidotti, *Metamorphoses: Towards a Materialist Theory of Becoming* (2002)  
Headings of Chapters 3 & 5

In the very various light of the above statements—made by respectively a philosopher-mathematician, an archbishop and theologian, and a materialist feminist cultural theorist—what follows is an attempt at an equation involving their common term: 'becoming'. It takes the form of a question, itself in the form of an equation:

BEING + BECOMING = ?

To this the following are some possible answers. They are framed as what might be called logo-rhythms rather than algorithms:

(i) = BE (COM) ING

(ii) >> BE COM ING

(iii)

	being	b e c o m i n g	b e
<i>BE</i>		<i>COM</i>	<i>ING</i>
	becoming	b e i n g	b e c o m

(iv) b e c o m i n g

This last, the simplest and neatest, is the one that on balance I prefer. And that's why I used it as the title for this subsection. You may have other ideas on 'becoming', with or without 'being' in play. Or perhaps there are other pairs of words related to creativity that you would like to experiment with. Blends and re-combinations of. 'Aesthetics', 'In(ter)vention' and 'Poetricks' are possibilities floated in the present piece; Braidotti's 'Met(r)amorphosis' and 'Meta(l)morphosis' above may suggest yet others. Even a single word, put under pressure, turns out to be both highly singular and deeply plural. In any event, to recall the opening phrase from *Genesis*, be fruitful and multiply!

***In the beginning was . . .***

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.  
*Gospel according to John 1.1, New International Version (1973)*

The above is another famous one-liner to do with creation. It is therefore another promising candidate for re-creation. This one is from the New Testament and may be compared—even combined—with the epigraph from the Old Testament re-invoked at the end of the last section. For example, how about 'In the beginning was the fruitful Word, and God was multiplied'? In fact, this is neither as irreligious—let alone sacrilegious—as it may first seem. The three-in-oneness of the Trinity (God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit) springs immediately to mind as an instance of a singularly multiple divinity at the core of Christian doctrine. Moreover, the New Testament is expressly and pervasively a continuation and culmination of the Old; it is arguably one of the most fundamental and sustained 'make it new' statements in world history. The fact that Christians see Christ as the Messiah while followers of Judaism and Islam see him as at most another prophet, is all part of the vexed and complex legacy of this particular act of *re . . . creation*. Indeed,

the precise way in which each of these religions of ‘the book’ offers to bridge, jump or bypass that all-important gap in the middle between the Testaments Old and New is fundamental in defining their distinctive take on the Word and its relation to the World.

‘Mind the Gap’, then, clearly has resonance for far more than the space between train and platform on the London Underground. All communication systems are full of gaps and silences, and the presently pointed gap in *re . . . creation* is simply a graphic way of making us mindful of this fact and of our attempts to deal with it. More to the immediate point, such fusions and fissions within ‘God-as-one-and-more’ not only remind us that the Bible is a nominally singular yet visibly doubled book. They also point to the crucial role of language in constructing visions of ‘creation’, ‘beginning’ and ‘origin’ in discourses of many kinds, scientific and religious ones in particular. There is not space here to elaborate the issue, though it was cued by my opening pair of epigraphs (Pope 2005, Chapter 5 establishes some initial terms of reference). Suffice it to say that the ‘gap’ between Religion and Science—between, say, *Genesis* and Evolution and between *St John* and the Big Bang—is the locus of some of the most energetic and resourceful intellectual debates of our time. Indeed, ‘minding the gap’ between Religion and Science—in the sense of both bridging and jumping over it while also recognising the real distances and respecting the distinct aims separating the two sides—is arguably a vital issue in a world palpably driven (and riven) by visions of scientific progress and religious salvation. (Barbour 1998 is a foundational text in this area; Sweetman 2010 a pedagogic overview; and Williams 2014 an extended meditation on the habits and limits of language—religious, scientific and otherwise.)

So much for the bigger, fragmented yet repairable or at least re-frameable picture. But there is still much that can be done on a miniature scale with the opening of the Gospel of St John alone. A number of absolutely routine gap-filling exercises (like the ‘cloze tests’ of elementary language teaching) can have remarkably profound implications. How would *you* ‘mind’—fill in, flesh out, fall into, jump over—these gaps?

- (i) In the beginning was . . . ? . . .
- (ii) In the . . . ? . . . was the word
- (ii) In the . . . ? . . . was . . . ? . . .
- (iv) Experimenting with alternatives to ‘In’, ‘the’ and ‘was’ (the less immediately conspicuous words) yields even more subtle and searching possibilities.

The results may be silly or suggestive, arbitrary or profound, and often they are a mix. But as with all such things, doing—not just seeing—is believing. And as the Dodo in *Alice in Wonderland* demonstrates, ‘The best way to explain it is to do it!’ So if you haven’t really had a go at the gaps and played around with other possibilities—including perhaps pictures, music, gestures, anything you like—then you haven’t really done it. You may have vaguely thought about it. But you haven’t actually done it in word and/or deed—utterance, speech act, performance . . . But if you have done it—in and on your own terms, in whatever materials come to mind or hand—that makes all the difference. This may appear to labour an obvious point. But it’s a point with crucial consequences for how we do—not just think—creativity. And it often gets overlooked or assumed, and

either way ignored or down-played. (A full-scale work-out and rationale is offered in Pope 1995; Scholes 2002 is an extended reflection; and Knights and Thurgar-Dawson 2006 an historical account with examples.) All that said—and something hopefully done—we can get back to the text and task in hand.

### **A Faustian impact—in word in deed**

Here is the hero of Goethe's *Faust* painstakingly reading and re-writing in his study (Part I, 1808). He too is meditating on the first line of St John's Gospel. And he too is doing it with the help of nothing more than the simplest of noun-based substitutions. Eventually, suddenly, he has the one he wants. Here it is as rendered in English verse by Louis MacNeice and EL Stahl:

I feel impelled to open the master text  
And this once, with true dedication,  
Take the sacred original  
And make in my mother tongue my own translation  
*(He opens a Bible)*  
It is written: In the beginning was the Word.  
Here I am stuck at once. Who will help me on?  
I am unable to grant the Word such merit,  
I must translate it differently  
If I am truly illumined by the spirit.  
It is written: In the beginning was the Mind.  
But why should my pen scour  
So quickly ahead? Consider that first line well.  
Is it the Mind that effects and creates all things?  
It *should* read: In the beginning was the Power.  
Yet, even as I am changing what I have writ,  
Something warns me not to abide by it.  
The spirit prompts me, I see in a flash what I need,  
And write: In the beginning was the Deed!

Wor(l)d-re-creation in deed! A stroke of genius, for sure. And equally surely the result of a sustained effort at opening up and filling in gaps. In fact, this whole text is a reminder that translation—in the richest sense of transformation rather than mere transference—is one of the most fundamental forms of verbal re-creation. For whether or not one subscribes to Robert Frost's famously partial view of the matter—that poetry is 'what gets lost in translation', itself open to being rewritten as, say, 'Poetry is what gets re-made through translation'—there is clearly much more at stake in Faust's painstaking deliberation and sudden inspiration than the mere choice of a German word for Greek *λογος* or Latin *verbum*. And so there is in the joint wrestling with Goethe's text by MacNeice as poet and Stahl as linguist. Together, of course—in the event—each turns out to be and do a bit of both. The result is a peculiarly rich kind of *con-verse-ation*—the kind that poets and translators regularly engage in (see Lefevere 1992; Pope 2010a and 2010b). So, in a more routine but still more remarkable sense, is the conversation we turn to next.

## Walking and talking: the re-creative power of conversation

Creativity inheres in responsive, dialogic, interpersonal acts of mutuality  
as well as in individual acts of self-expression.  
Ron Carter, *Language and Creativity: The Art of Common Talk* (2004: 48)

At this point we move from a primarily textual take on creativity to a more contextual one. We also shift emphasis from our own individual dialogues with texts through reading and re-writing to the matter of conversation at large. In particular, we look at the role of talking while walking with friends, sharing past and present experiences and deepening relationships. The basic proposition, formally enunciated in the above epigraph and underwritten by numerous therapeutic models and practices, is that *the main thing conversation creates is relationship with others and a sense of self*. Added to this is the common-sense observation, formalized in all sorts of physical and mental health regimes, that getting out and walking and talking with a friend is one of the best ways of sharing distress, avoiding depression and enjoying life. All this leads to a fresh grasp of creativity in at least three ways:

1. a marked shift of emphasis from free-standing text and apparent monologue to *text-in-context* and *actual dialogue*;
2. the strengthening of a relatively weak notion of individualistic recreation into a principle of *richly interpersonal re-creation*;
3. a clear recognition—and firm revaluation—of *conversation* as the main way in which people constantly *form and re-form relationships* with others along with their own sense of *personal identity* and worth.

In sum, to re-invoke an earlier term, the main thing conversation creates is a shared sense of ‘human becoming’.

There is a further, more specific and perhaps more contentious point I would like to make. This is that it is primarily through face-to-face conversation—perhaps especially talking while walking outdoors—that people re-create themselves and one another most fully, flexibly and realistically. This is shadowed by its converse: that information exchange, relationship-making and identity-building by virtual means—typically though now not exclusively indoors and on screen—is best seen as a secondary or supplementary way of creating relationships and identities, and at worst a damaging substitute for them. Points 1 to 3 above are grounded in empirical and theoretical work on large-scale conversation corpora such as that done by Carter and others (see Carter 2004). These also tend to underwrite a view of creativity as ‘an extraordinary capacity of ordinary people’, and can therefore be aligned with the initial impulse behind ‘creativity’ as a broadly secular and potentially democratized human capacity (meaning 3 in Diagram 1). This trajectory can be traced in various co-edited collections (e.g. Maybin and Swann 2007; Swann, Pope and Carter 2011). The additional provocation is my own, though it resonates with influential work on the limitations of creative learning, play and gaming in predominantly virtual, especially solitary communicative modes (e.g. Sefton-Green et al 2011, Part III).

But here, rather than simply rehearse these arguments for and against, I shall accent the positive and take a single instance of a talk and walk involving two men (myself and a

friend) and tease out some implications from there. This will be done through anecdotal report punctuated by pointed gaps (. . .) and in effect without any other trace of script or transcription at all. This may appear perverse in an argument expressly on conversation; but it follows from a combination of expedience and experiment. The substance of the conversation was and will remain private, it went unrecorded and in any case neither of us can recall in detail much of what was said. What is important and is still clearly remembered by both of us, however—and it's the significant issue being highlighted here—is the overall fact-and-effect of the conversation as a kind of event. It was a hugely life-affirming experience, and all the more so for being initially grounded in feelings of immediate distress and long-term depression. Naturally, it's an observer-participant perspective: live and unrecorded private conversations have no other. After the event, however—treating the text as an imaginative opportunity rather than a historical record—you are free to fill the gaps as you see fit and feel moved. In this form and context, the text is as much yours as mine.

*So there we were, me and an old friend, walking and talking one lunchtime. It was a weekday in Oxford in early spring: bright but chilly, quite breezy. Two old friends in every sense, me just turned sixty-five and him ten years older. Both academics—same institution, different departments. We've known one another on and off for over thirty years, in and out of work. I'd recently had a long-term relationship break-up, he'd been suffering from depression for a while and was currently being treated for it. We hadn't seen one another for well over a year, though we'd been in touch by telephone and email. So each of us knew in outline what the other had been going through. But there was a lot to catch up on—a lot of the detail. It could be a hard afternoon. We started with a long, strong hug and got something to drink and a couple of sandwiches. Takeaway. We were both too full of other stuff to sit down. So we set off walking and talking (. . .)*

*It turned out that the area had changed a lot. We both thought we knew Oxford well, but this part was obviously being redeveloped at quite a pace. Much was new to us. The Old Royal Infirmary had been transformed almost beyond recognition. I'd had my eyes done there. He'd had a stomach ulcer done. Only the Victorian façade and a dry fountain remained. Behind that were what looked like student halls of residence. Off right there was a big open space and on the other side a brand-new building and grounds. All reflecting glass and grey metal, a library or conference centre or something. We carried on walking and talking, heads down, touching one another on the sleeve every now and then. (. . .)*

*Twice we stopped to face one another, holding shoulders and looking in our eyes. Both glad of the wind that we could pass off as making them water. Both smiling because we knew it wasn't (. . .)*

*There really were a lot of changes in the area. The old Observatory stood out clearly now with the surrounding buildings all swept away. Creamy sandstone in the sunshine. Nice. The sun was getting quite warm now. We didn't go in but said we perhaps would another time. The new building was evidently a Mathematics Institute with some strikingly patterned tiling outside: 'Penrose Paving' a sign said, and went on to explain its uniquely non-repeating pattern. That was interesting. So we walked in through the foyer heading for the big glass doors opposite. Suddenly we were among a chattering throng of students, coming and going from classes, on the way to the library, getting things to eat and drink. A big electronic display showed what was on where. An intriguing ABC of Mathematics wall-charts caught our eyes stretching off down a long corridor. We looked at the first two. 'A is for Aperiodic tiles'—ah yes, the Penrose Paving outside. 'B is for*

*Bayesian inference'. We didn't quite get that. So we went down the corridor looking for a loo. We were still chatting about maths we had and hadn't done at school, along with everything else, while having a pee. (. . .)*

*Then we went outside again. It had clouded over a bit now, but the wind had dropped and it wasn't raining at least. We headed for where we thought we might get through to Walton Street. Surely that's till there. On the way we passed a silver scroll in a tree, with writing on. I talked about trees in the garden I would miss. He said he had to have theirs pruned by someone else now. (. . .)*

*Walton Street, a road of odd shops and houses with the University Press at one end and an art cinema at the other, had always felt a bit poky and out of the way. Now it was connected up to the centre. You could walk right through from Walton Street to the colleges on St Giles and the big stores on Cornmarket. Past the Old Infirmary which wasn't any more. Then we talked about our children being born at the other big hospital, the John Radcliffe, near where we'd worked (. . .)*

*Mid-afternoon now and almost time to go. So we stopped for a pot of tea and shared a pastry on Gloucester Green while waiting for my bus. We sat at a table outside and watched the market traders packing up. We had both bought fruit and veg and the odd book or record there over the years. Now lots of cds and cell-phone covers. And yet it looked and felt much the same. Still plenty of fruit and veg stalls (. . .) We were happy just to sit quietly. At ease with the teas and the sunshine and the murmur of people clearing up. We said we should do it again. Soon.*

I won't comment directly on the above text. It can speak for itself, in the gaps as well as the words. What I will do is offer a couple of ways out of and back into it. The first takes the form of a sample bibliography; the second, again, takes the form of 'poetic diagrammatics' (of which more shortly). First the bibliographic bit.

Below are a few books and other resources that walk and talk this particular city (Oxford). They are offered merely as examples, and in the knowledge that there are—or will or could be—similar things for cities and other places elsewhere. Oxford, for reasons of historical accident, just happens to be rich in such literature; but everywhere is rich in its own way if you know where and how to look. In fact, walking with a friend who also knows it is probably the best place to start. The books are:

The Gateway Project's (2005) *Oxford: One City, Many Voices*—a blend of writing and photos by homeless people alongside pieces about Oxford by established writers and famous figures.

James Attlee's (2007) *Isolarion: A Different Oxford Journey*—a montage of essays meditating on the people, events and atmospheres associated with a single road, what is now called 'psycho-geography' and develops out of urban 'flaneurie' (after Baudelaire) and rural 'walking tours /journals'.

Philip Pullman's *Lyra's Oxford* (2003, with map) which blends actual and imaginary places with the plot and figures of his 'Dark Materials' trilogy.

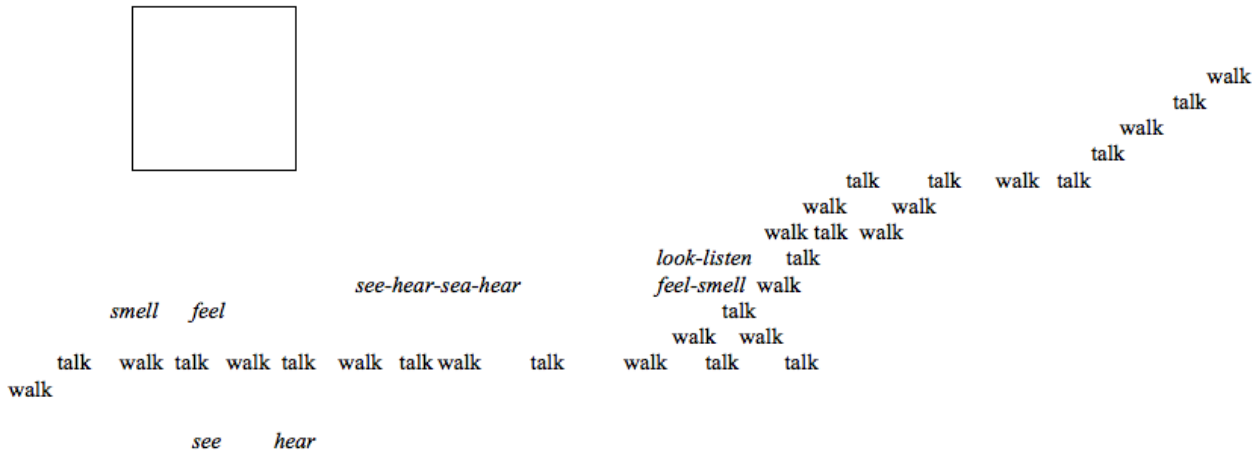
A full framework for an undergraduate writing project featuring walking, talking and a blend of critical-creative practices, including samples of student work, can be found in the companion web-site by Pope and Macrae for Pope 2012. Again this features Oxford, though it can readily be adapted for anywhere. A classic instance of writing, walking and imag(in)ing the city is Walter Benjamin's 'Arcades' and archiving projects in the 1930s

(Benjamin 1997); Ian Sinclair's *London Orbital* (2002) and subsequent books do the same, often including talk along the way. Gilbert White's *The Natural History of Selborne* (1789) is an older rural counterpart in letter form.

***Small machines for musing***

This is the other thing I offer in place of a commentary on the above (occluded) conversation. It takes the form of short poems / word shapes / diagrams. All have to do with the creativity of conversation in general, and of talking while walking with friends in particular. So, while none of these texts uses the c-word or the re-c-word, each and all supply more notes towards a possible Poetics of Re-creation. What's more, for good measure, I suggest they be looked at and reflected on while listening to music. These particular 'small machines' were put together while listening to albums by Eric Satie, Ian Dury, Nina Simone and Kate Bush—so obviously they're open to a wide range of musical influences! (Muse, music, musing, amuse- and bemuse-ment are related words foregrounded in the next section.) If some of these 'small machines' prompt some musing—or machining—of your own, so much the better.

(i)





(ii)            W  
                  ALKING  
                  T

(iii)

                  Walk        Talk

                                  -ING

                  Feel        Breath

(iv)

anthropy?  
sophy  
*phil o*                      *pastry!*  
logy  
ately?

(v)

ference  
ition  
*trans*                      *port*  
action  
formation

*well after Winnicott (Playing and Reality, 1974)*

(vi)

Heal	Hole
⦿	○
Holy	Whole

*'Eye and Thou', after Martin Buber's I and Thou (1928)*

*and*

*'The smallest social unit is two. In life we develop one another.'*

*Bertolt Brecht's Short Organon for the Theatre (1948)*

(iv)

	speech	acts	
	word		worlds
dia			logues
	con		ation
		verse	

(v) *A ship (for Alan)*

end  
ends  
f ends  
fiends  
friends  
f r i e n d i p  
f r i e n d s i p  
f r i e n d s h i p  
F R I E N D S H I P

(vi) Friendly fish (for other Alan)

          talking                  walking  
wal king talking walking talking  
          walking                  walking

---

‘Concrete poetry’, by the way, is *not* what I would call any of these things. It’s far too stodgy and set a phrase—and altogether too dry and dusty a label—for any game worth playing. Texts like these here are best approached as try-outs, micro-essays, proto-types, kites to fly, machines that may crash—then be taken back to the drawing board for re-design, and so back to the test/text-pad for another go. Each one is a unique and potentially valuable but palpably fallible and eminently improvable experiment. They are one-offs in a process of *re-fabrication*—not one-size-fits-all products of *pre-fabrication*. ‘Concrete poetry’ suggests you either like it or lump it. This is a quite different conception of poetics, using design-sensitive as well as mass-produced textology.

(The kinds of work and play I have in mind are represented by: Rothenberg 1974, a classic American anthology of experimental writing; *OULIPO* 2009, a sampling of the influential French ‘Workshop of Potential Literature’; and the endlessly resourceful Scots-English poet-maker, Edwin Morgan 2008. An application of poetics to theoretical writing is Sheppard 2008, and a critical and historical anthology is Bray, Gibbons and McHale 2012.)

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(vii) The following words were cut out of a silver metal banner placed in the branches of a silver birch tree in the grounds of the Mathematics Institute:

*A mathematician, like a painter or a poet, is a maker of patterns*

(viiia) Re-written with the above conversation in mind:

*A mathematician, like a painter or a poet, is a maker of patterns*

*– and so are two friends walking and talking around it*

(viiib) Re-written with creativity at large in mind:

*A mathematician, like a painter or a poet, is a maker*

*and breaker and stretcher and bender and forger and faker and fashioner of  
patterns*

*that always turn out to be more or less*

*other*

*wise*

### **A beginning alternative lexicon**

There is neither a first nor a last word, and there are no limits to the dialogic context (it passes from the limitless past to the limitless future). Even the most ancient meanings, originating in dialogue of long past centuries, can never be stable (once and for all completed, finished)—they will always change (be renewed) in the course of the following and future developments of the dialogue.

Mikhail Bakhtin, *Notes Towards a Methodology of the Human Sciences* (1940, 1975).

These words by one of the most stimulating and contentious of linguistic and philosophers (was he a materialist Marxist? and/or a mystical Christian?) resonate throughout the present piece. Their manner of composition, transmission and here translation is also both symptomatic and significant. First drafted in 1940, the additions (here in brackets) were amongst the last notes Bakhtin made just before he died in 1975. The above translation is based on the published version that appears at the end of a posthumous collection with a title (not Bakhtin’s) that transliterates from the Cyrillic into the Roman alphabet as *Estetika Slovesnovo Tvortchestva* and can be translated as ‘The Aesthetics of Verbal Creation’ or ‘Creativity’! (Bakhtin 1989: 316. This passage is translated slightly differently and without the brackets in Holquist 1990: 39.) All in all,

both in its substance and as a series of textual events, the above passage by Bakhtin just about sums up all I have to say about the issues broached in the present piece. It also serves as a fitting introduction to a lexicon offering words alternative to all the ‘creation/creativity’ featured so far. Certainly it continues to issue both an invitation and a warning as far as the ongoing dialogic nature of language goes. (More generally, see Bakhtin in Morris 1994; Hirschkop and Shepherd 2001.)

The table that follows is put together so as to draw attention to ‘older’ and ‘newer’ senses of some powerful and persistent terms alternative to the c- and re-c words. The fact that all of these terms shift, switch and sometimes completely flip in sense over time is a stirring reminder that none of them, however ancient, is ever completely ‘done and dusted’. Nor, by the same token, is the currently dominant sense here to stay forever. The two main columns of the table are labelled accordingly: *Older senses persist*, albeit with archaic and subordinate or specialised meanings; even while *Newer senses insist*—or appear to—that they are the natural and necessary meanings nowadays and, implicitly, always have been. The continuation dots at the ends and beginnings of each entry, . . . , are a further reminder that many meanings, older and newer, are simultaneously available—or at least accessible—at the present time. Which ones each of us emphasises and which lines of understanding and enquiry we pursue or promote is a matter of choice not compulsion. And some of them exceed as well precede currently dominant conceptions of creativity.

The first step, however, is to recognise that even with notionally ‘the same word’ there is no single, stable, natural and necessary meaning instituted and agreed upon for everyone always. We saw this with the four and more main senses of the ‘create’ words identified at the beginning. That is why dictionary entries—especially in fully historical dictionaries such as *The Oxford English Dictionary*—never offer simple, one-word substitutions or even neatly pre-established hierarchies of sense. They provide the tools—and if you like the toys—to pose and re-pose lots of informed and challenging questions. The following ‘table’ looks deceptively stable and neatly laid out. But there’s actually a feast and a fight going on. (Other metaphors for and ways of modeling this process are gestured to afterwards.) The main thing now is to get stuck in and sample these entrées:

<i>Term</i>	<i>OLDER SENSES that persist</i>	<i>NEWER SENSES that insist</i>
<b><i>Genius</i></b>	<i>Genius</i> was first a spirit of place ( <i>genius loci</i> ), then of whole peoples (‘the German / American / Japanese genius for . . .’); then the salient characteristic of anyone (‘Every man has his genius’, Dr Johnson, 1775) . . .	. . . <i>Genius</i> is now more an extraordinary quality of exceptional individuals, especially male ones (‘Shakespeare / Einstein was a genius’) but is often used casually or ironically too (‘You’re a genius!’)
	<i>Muses</i> , classically, personified whole areas of cultural knowledge and skill (Terpsichore of Dancing, Harmonia of Music-making, Clio of History-writing,	. . . ‘ <i>Music</i> ’, generically, is the sole survivor of the ancient Muses while ‘ <i>Museums</i> ’ are where culturally valued objects are gathered and memorialized.

<p><b>Muse</b></p>	<p>etc.) and as such were appealed to for inspiration by practitioners. Later, artists and writers tended to invoke real or imaginary people as their personal Muse ...</p>	<p>A few people still occasionally, usually ironically, speak of 'my Muse'; though this may leave others <i>amused</i> or <i>bemused</i>, whether or not they spot the verbal link.</p>
<p><b>Inspiration</b></p>	<p><i>Inspire</i> had the primarily physical sense of 'in-breathing' (Latin <i>in-spirare</i>) and by extension, metaphysically, was identified with the sustaining 'afflatus' or <i>spirit</i> (a related 'breath' word) of the Gods and Muses (plural). A particular place (Arcadia, say) or people (Athenians) could also inspire others through their native 'spirit' or national 'genius'; and they still can . . .</p>	<p>. . . 'Divine inspiration' (at most) and 'spiritual influence' (at least) continue to be central to the experience of many cultures and individuals. Usually these are reckoned to flow from just One or a Many-in-One God (e.g. the Christian Trinity, including Holy Spirit). Meanwhile, people still get 'inspired' by love of all kinds, especially of particular people and what they have done; otherwise, more routinely, we get 'influenced'.</p>
<p><b>Invention</b></p>	<p><i>Inventio</i> (from Latin <i>invenire, inventum</i>) has the root senses of 'finding out' or 'coming in' and was applied to a wide range of 'finding' and 'incoming /gathering' activities: hence 'inventory', meaning a list of 'things found', and the rhetorical sense of <i>inventio(n)</i> referring to the finding of suitable materials to inform or adorn a speech. The Christian 'Invention of the Cross' referred to both its 'finding' and its 'in-coming' in a procession. This core sense of 'coming' persists in such words as <i>prevention</i> (coming before) and <i>intervention</i> (coming between) . . .</p>	<p>. . . <i>Invention</i>, in modern times, has acquired the very different—virtually opposite—sense of 'making up' (not 'finding out'). The shift can be traced back to the 17<sup>th</sup> c. and is broadly attributed to the pressure of the scientific and industrial revolutions and of technological change. The marked emphasis on <i>Mechanical Invention(s)</i> (singular and plural) set the seal firmly on 'inventor' and 'inventing' meaning 'a maker' and 'making' specifically of something new. <i>Discovery</i> took over as the main 'finding' word, while 'invention' now easily gets confused with the unrelated but similar-sounding <i>innovation</i>.</p>
<p><b>Original</b></p>	<p><i>Original</i> has a strong root sense of 'ancient, oldest, from the beginning'—as in <i>origin</i>—and was primarily identified with people as the 'original natives'; hence the Western name 'aborigines' (from Latin <i>ab origine, 'from the beginning'</i>) for the Australian peoples they first found there. 'The original' of a painting or poem, notice,</p>	<p>. . . <i>Original</i> has now acquired the substantially different—virtually opposite—sense of 'novel, latest, never been done before'. And this shift in sense parallels that of 'Invention' (above) It became especially marked over the 18<sup>th</sup> c when 'original composition' increasingly meant 'novel work' (not traditional ones). With</p>

	is likely to refer to the first one made, often hailed as ‘genuine’ or ‘authentic’. As such, it expresses a conservative preoccupation with <i>origins</i> (and all things old) as being inherently worthy of respect. This is less the case nowadays ...	Romanticism <i>originality</i> became a mark of extraordinary individuals. ‘An original’ painting or poem is now likely to be one that stands out from the crowd. Though it should be added that the word can still be bent both ways. ‘Original’ recipes for jam, curry or anything else can be very old <i>or</i> new!
<b>Evolution</b> <b>Revolution</b>	<i>Evolution</i> and <i>revolution</i> both depend upon a core sense of ‘turning’; the stem comes from Latin <i>volvere, volutum</i> (to turn, turned) and its various prefixes indicate in which direction the particular ‘turning’ is to be conceived. So <i>involving</i> suggests ‘turning in’ or ‘into’, <i>evolving</i> suggests ‘turning out’ or ‘away from’ and <i>revolving</i> ‘turning round’ or ‘back’. In fact, Latin <i>evolutio</i> initially referred to the unrolling of a papyrus or parchment scroll, while <i>revolvere</i> , ‘to roll around’, was something that a wheel did, the sea did with waves, and people did with thoughts. Gradually, however, both words developed more specific applications ...	. . . <i>Revolution</i> in early modern times (16 <sup>th</sup> c. on) was contentiously applied to the revolution of the earth about the sun (rather than the other way round). By extension, the word was increasingly applied to major social and political upheavals (e.g. the English, American, French and Russian <i>Revolutions</i> ) and then to major technology-driven and communication-related transformations, hence the Industrial and Information <i>Revolutions</i> (all with a capital R). Something similar happened to the routine sense of <i>evolution</i> (‘turning away’ or ‘out from’): after being applied to the folding of geological strata it was used by Darwin and others to refer to processes of ‘natural selection’ and ‘adaptation.
	<i>The rest as</i> <b>HISTORY</b>	<i>they say is</i> <b>NOW</b>

A more detailed picture of the complex history and teeming present of each of these terms—and many more—can be put together by turning to *The Oxford English Dictionary* 1989, *Roget's International Thesaurus* 2008 and *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics* (Greene et al 2012). Brisker and more provocative are Williams 1983; Ayto 1990; Bennett et al 2005; and Deleuze 1996. A more discursive and differently staged treatment of these and other terms can be found in Pope 2005, Chapters 3 & 4. The first is spanned by a single monstrous sentence that breaks down and builds up so as to address each of its constituent elements in turn: *Creativity is extra/ordinary, original and fitting, full-filling, in(ter)ventive, co-operative, un/conscious, fe< >male, re . . . creation*. The second engages variously with the specific dynamics of *emergence and complexity, play and game* and *order and chaos*. All these terms and others turn up again-afresh as an extended poem and ten-point programme in the last two sections of the present piece.



But just before those, it's worth briefly considering how the above 'table' might be re-set or be replaced by a different piece of verbal and conceptual furniture. For sure, the *Older / Newer* sides have the initial appeal and broad utility of all binary, roughly symmetrical structures. In that respect it's a kind of two-side folding table. But notice that it's only fully opened up when it's operated with a logic *both/and*; conversely, with a logic of *either/or*, it's only half-open and half-closed.

But such structures (like extended metaphors) are only helpful in taking first steps and making first moves. Pushed too far, they soon become crude and constraining ways of handling information and generating ideas. The solution, obviously, is to try out other possible shapes and strategies—and also fiddle around with more localized graphic and verbal devices as the opportunity arises. After all, roughly made tables—like concrete poetry—tend to get rocky after a while. So we have to keep the pictures moving, re-designing the diagrams, remaking the poetics. That is what the last two sections aim to do.

### **A poetic A-to-Z of re . . . creation**

This is a distillation into poetry of three note-books written when planning a small book with the provisional title 'Key Terms in Creativity'. By the time I had listed and briefly characterised what I felt was essential to each term, I found I had more or less said what I wanted to say. The list gradually turned into the poem below. The book didn't seem worth writing after that; but I have repeatedly tinkered with various versions of the poem. One was read out at a Poetics and Linguistics Association conference in 2010 and prompted a noticeboard full of responses. Another went into a co-edited book spanning Language, Literature and Creative Writing (Swann, Pope and Carter 2011: 268–69). The present version is further re-cast and sports a fresh title (heading this section) and a last line that ends with a whizz rather than a whimper. If this text prompts you to make some marks or remarks of your own, it will have done as much as I could hope. And perhaps more than the book I didn't write.



and then  
back again  
continuously  
doing differently  
extra . . . ordinarily  
f r e s h t i n g z

### Towards a poetics of re-creation: ten principles for re-writing

A good theory does not totalize:  
it is an instrument for multiplication and it also multiplies itself.  
Gilles Deleuze *Negotiations, 1972–1990* (1995: 208)

This is a brief and designedly provocative summary of the principles of a possible Poetics of Re-creation. Various versions of these principles have appeared in the contexts of language, literature and creative writing (e.g. Pope 2006, 2011). The present version expressly addresses the matter of *Re . . . Creation*, which pops up again with internal suspension dots at the end. The first thing to do, however, is read through the lot asking yourself how far you are prepared to go along with it.

1. In reading texts we rewrite them—in our heads if not on the page.
2. Interpretation *of* texts always involves interaction *with* texts.
3. Interaction *with* texts necessarily entails intervention *in* texts.
4. One text leads to another and another and another, so we had better grasp texts *intertextually*—across the spaces between.
5. Our own words are always implicated in those of others, so we had better grasp our selves interpersonally through *dialogue*—thereby joining in the ongoing ‘conversations’ we call culture.
6. Because textual *changes* always involve social *exchanges*. You can’t have the one without the other—and one another. And the one always connects to the many.
7. *Responding* fully and being *responsive* are therefore *responsible* acts. So perhaps we should talk about the *responsibility* of ‘*response-ability*’, and about actively *answering* as well as being *answerable*.

8. *Creating*, meanwhile, involves re-combining as well as replacing. And *criticising* can be a constructive (or destructive) as well as a discriminating activity. Sometimes, then, it is better to talk of *critical-creative* or *creative-critical* activity, depending upon the emphasis. Either way, thoroughgoing *critique* always comes out as radical *re-creation*—taking apart to put together differently.

9. That is why *'interpretation'* can be done through acts of 'creative' *performance* (as in dance, music and drama, and all kinds of adaptation) as well as through 'critical' commentary and analysis (in the full-blown 'essay', for example). For we are all in various ways or at different moments performers *and* commentators, adopters *and* adapters, critics *and* creators.

10. So this is why it is important to distinguish full-blown *Re-creation* (fundamental re-making) from mere *recreation* (entertainment or pastime). And also why, to frame it more provocatively, there is an insistently suspended pause in the middle of *Re . . . Creation*. For the relation between old and new—found and made, discovered and invented—has itself to be renegotiated afresh with each and every instance. Mind the gap!

These ten principles, which get cumulatively more complex and hectoring, have an awkwardly paradoxical double-bind. If you agree with them completely and wouldn't change a single word, they are clearly wrong. But if you disagree with them completely and would change the lot, then equally clearly they are right. This paradox is irresolvable given the present premise and within the terms offered. So what is to be done? One course, I suggest, is to re-write at least some of these principles and see what happens. (They are after all, in every sense, 'ten principles for re-writing'.) Another way out is to try to ignore or forget them completely and start with a clean sheet or screen. (But can you now ignore them? And is there—are we—ever a *tabula rasa*?) Still, whether you respond positively or negatively is perhaps less important than the fact that you respond at all—at least in the head, possibly on paper or a screen, preferably in conversation or in some other exchange with someone or something else. Maybe walking and talking. Or musing on machines. Or doing something quite different. Something creative anyway. Or whatever you want to call it.

## References and other names

These named meanings are swept towards other names;  
names call to each other, reassemble, and their grouping calls for further naming.  
Roland Barthes, *S/Z* (1975)

With the above words in mind and an acute awareness that there all sorts of other relevant people and books and ideas hardly or not at all mentioned, I shall preface the formal References with an informal and far from complete 'A-to-Z' of other names. (Well, there's an A and a Z but some letters and a lot of names are missing.) So I call it something else and ask you—one last time—to be kind enough to fill out the gaps with whatever you turn up on the web or the library, your mind or conversation.

## Abracadabra of absent authors

Abbs, Artaud, Baudrillard, Benjamin, Bergson, Borges, Calvino, Carroll (Lewis), Cixous, Escher, Etchells, Guattari, Halliday (MAK), Haraway, Hofstadter D., Joyce, Kress, Kristeva, Nietzsche, Rabelais, Sterne, Vygotsky, Wilde, Wittgenstein, MarX (K and Brothers), Žižek

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